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WHAT INFLUENCES OUR EGG PRODUCTION?

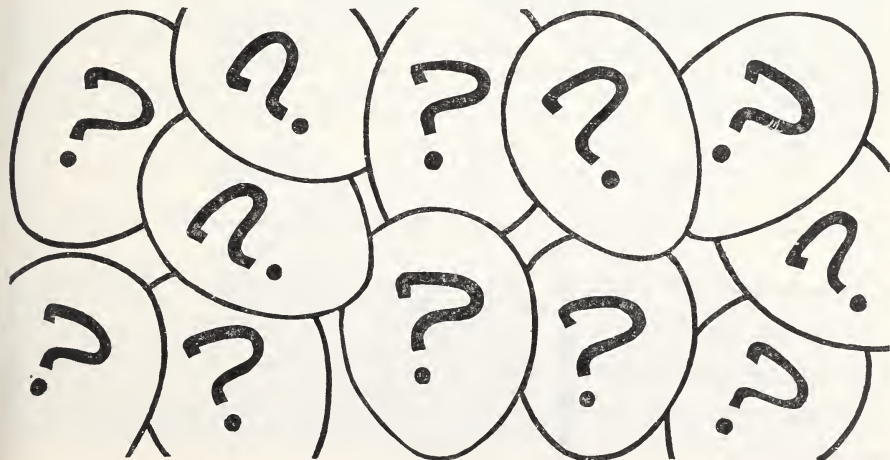
The egg producer not only needs to be skilled in the production and marketing of his product; he needs also the courage and the financial resources to take the lean years with the good.

Although eggs are a leading money farm product—over the last decade farmers' receipts from eggs ranked fifth among the products of U.S. farms—receipts from eggs are more variable than those of many commodities. The average change from year to year during the 1949-58 decade was 12 percent. The largest change was 31 percent and the smallest 2 percent.

Changes in prices farmers received for eggs accounted for most of this variation in receipts. The average annual change for the decade was 14 percent, ranging from a high of 31 percent to a low of 1 percent.

Production was much more stable. The change from 1 year to the next averaged $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent. Five years showed variations of 1 percent or less. The largest change was 5 percent.

Experience shows that egg prices not only rise and fall with changes in supply, but they usually change by a con-



EGGS—Continued

siderably larger percentage. Thus, a first step in analyzing what influences egg prices is to determine what causes farmers to produce more or less.

The quantity of eggs produced in a year depends on the number of layers on farms and the rate at which they lay. Figure 1 shows the main influences on numbers of layers and rates of lay. In this figure, as in figure 2, arrows show the direction of influence from one factor to another. Solid arrows show major, and dashed arrows minor, paths of influence.

Rate of Lay

Output per layer in a particular year largely represents the result of previous trends in breeding and in production practices, though it may be influenced to some extent by other factors. As a rule, farmers attempt to get as high a rate of lay per bird as possible.

Two of the four factors bearing on the size of the laying flock also are subject to little control by producers during a particular year. The number of layers on hand at the beginning of the year is fixed for that year. It is the result of previous adjustments made by farmers. Mortality, or death losses, in laying flocks mainly reflects disease control and sanitation practices. Although favorable prices might cause farmers to pay increased attention to the health of their flocks, producers probably try at all times to keep mortality to a minimum.

The two main ways in which farmers control the size of their flocks and adjust egg production during a year are by changes in the number of pullets raised and in the number of layers sold. Farmers' decisions as to how

many pullets to add to their flocks and how many layers to sell are influenced by a variety of forces. (See fig. 2.)

High egg prices in relation to prices for feed may lead farmers to increase the number of pullets raised and reduce the number of hens sold. A low egg-feed price ratio will have the opposite effect. Feed prices in turn are affected by the number of livestock to be fed, the supplies of feed available, and the prices of livestock and livestock products.

Study of the data for past years on the factors illustrated in figures 1 and 2 indicates that changes in the ratio of prices farmers receive for eggs to the prices they pay for feed are a guide to changes in the number of pullets they raise and the number of layers they sell. (See fig. 3.)

The number of layers removed from flocks is also influenced by the number of potential layers on farms at the beginning of the year. This effect is interrelated with the current profitability of egg production. Over the extent of a year, we assume that the net result of these forces and decisions will be reflected in more layers being removed from flocks in unfavorable years than in years of good returns.

Egg-Feed Price Ratio

It has been found that, on the average, a change of 10 percent in the January-June average egg-feed price ratio is accompanied by a 4-percent change in the same direction in the number of pullets raised.

On the average, a 10-percent change in the annual average egg-feed price ratio is accompanied by a 4- to 7-percent change, in the opposite direction, in the number of layers removed from flocks.

(Continued on p. 4)

The Agricultural Situation is sent free to crop, livestock, and price reporters in connection with their reporting work.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING FARM EGG PRODUCTION

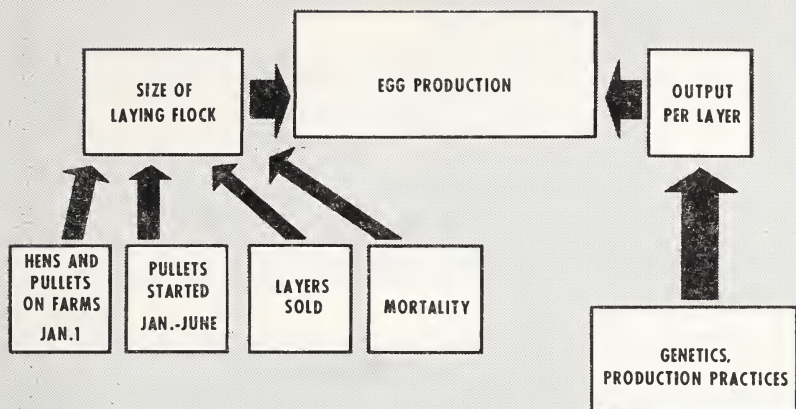


Figure 1.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING SIZE OF LAYING FLOCK

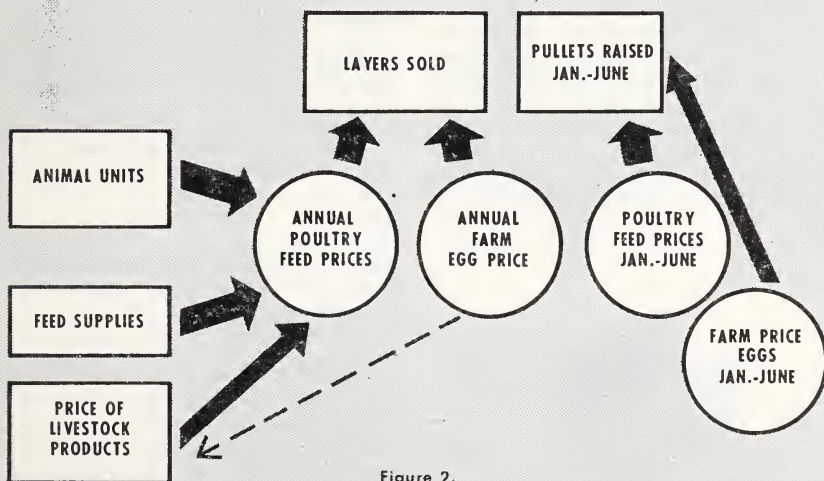


Figure 2.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

NEG. 7478-59 (9) AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

IF THE JANUARY-JUNE AVERAGE EGG-FEED PRICE RATIO CHANGES FROM YEAR EARLIER BY

10%

NO. OF PULLETS RAISED CHANGES-

4%

IF THE ANNUAL EGG-FEED PRICE RATIO CHANGES FROM YEAR EARLIER BY

10%

NO. OF LAYERS SOLD CHANGES-

4 to 7%

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Figure 3.

NEG. 7479-59 (9)

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

EGGS—Continued

What Makes Egg Prices?

Egg production is just one of a number of factors that influence egg prices. If you're interested in what makes the prices farmers receive for eggs, drop us a postcard and we'll send you a free copy of the popular publication—"Egg Prices and Factors That Influence Them." Our address is: The Agricultural Situation, Marketing Information Division, AMS, USDA, Washington 25, D.C.



Census Figures Help Crop Reporting

You've probably heard a lot about the census lately—what with the censustaker around last fall and earlier this year. But did you know that your Crop Reporting Board puts census figures to work?

We regard the first estimates we publish as preliminary and subject to changes as new information becomes available. This is where the census figures come into the picture. They're one of our most important sources of what we call "check" data—we use them to check our original estimates and, if necessary, to revise them.

The Federal Census of Agriculture—it is made every 5 years—furnishes important information that is used for revising estimates on acreage, yield, and production of crops, and inventory numbers of livestock.

This adjusting of the estimates is of more than historical value—it helps us strengthen our estimates in the future.



OUTLOOK

Soybeans

Firm prices through the summer are in prospect. The demand for export and crushing will be as strong as last year and supplies are slightly less. Since October, the beginning of the 1959-60 season, prices to farmers have averaged \$2, about same as last year and 15 cents above support. Prices after midsummer will be influenced by prospects for 1960 crop.



Wheat

The seasonal price decline in prices of hard red winter started a little earlier than usual this spring. Prices are likely to reach the year's low in late June or early July, then advance seasonally. The prospects for winter crop have improved this spring and 1960 production is now estimated at 992 million bushels.

Wool

World production and consumption this season are about in balance at levels as high or higher than the peaks of last season. This situation points to fairly stable prices into midsummer. Similar stability is indicated for prices to U.S. growers, though a moderate decline may occur around midyear as the result of increasing stocks of apparel wool from the new clip. Wool was consumed in the United States in 1959 at an average rate of 2.4 pounds a person, 25 percent above 1958. Wool's share of total fiber use also was up.

Turkeys

A crop as large as intended early in 1960 now seems doubtful. Poultry hatchings in the first quarter were 29 percent above last year, but dipped below 1959 as the main hatching season got underway. Farmers' intentions to raise 6 percent more turkeys than last year probably will not be realized. A substantial reduction in the number of turkey breeder hens is the main reason for the cutback in the poul hatch. The recent softening in price also may have contributed.

Cattle

Slaughter probably will continue above last year through 1960. But production will continue to exceed slaughter. Numbers are likely to continue to increase this year, though probably at a slower rate than last year's 4.9 million head. A moderate decline in fed cattle prices is expected this spring in view of the large numbers on feed—8 percent more than a year ago on April 1 in 21 leading States. If spring pastures continue to develop well, strong demand is likely to hold feeder and stocker prices near current levels.



Eggs

A sharp cut in hatchings of replacement chicks will keep egg production below 1959 levels through the rest of 1960. Hatchings through April were a third below last year—although 7



OUTLOOK

Continued

percent more eggs were in incubators May 1. The main months of the hatching season for egg-type chicks have passed. The number of chickens raised in 1960 is likely to be at least a fifth below 1959 and smallest since records began in 1909. The National laying flock on May 1 was 3 percent below the same date of 1959. The percentage difference will widen as the year progresses. Egg production so far has run 4 percent below the same months last year.

The outlook for prices is considerably brighter than last year when they dipped to the lowest levels since the early 1940's. Prices to farmers spurted above a year earlier in late March, boosted by lower production and bad weather. Mid-April average was 27 percent above last year—prices probably will stay above last year's levels by about this percentage through 1960.



Milk

Production this summer is likely to run ahead of last year by a larger margin than it has so far this year. In May–September 1959, output showed its largest decline from 1958. Through April, production exceeded the same months of 1959 by 1 percent.

Broilers

Settings of eggs in incubators climbed above a year earlier in the second week of April. The 6-percent increase was followed by gains of 10, 12, and 13 percent in the following 3 weeks. The demand for broilers will be seasonally strong this summer and prices probably

will hold above a year earlier if settings do not increase further.

Peaches

Another big peach crop is being produced in the 9 Southern States this year, according to May 1 prospects. The 15½-million-bushel total exceeds 1959 by 4 percent, the 1949–58 average by 58 percent. Prospects also favor another large crop in California.



Feed

Feed grain was used at a record rate in the first half of the feeding year which began last October 1. For the entire 1959–60 season, consumption in the United States probably will top last year's 137 million tons by about 7 million—exports are likely to at least equal the record 1958–59 total of 13 million tons. Despite the increase, disappearance probably will fall about 9 million tons short of production, adding a like amount to the carryover.

Potatoes

The movement of the new crop will pick up rapidly in the next few weeks. The late spring crop is expected to exceed last year by 11 percent. Some bunching of shipments is likely because of delayed planting and development in the southeast.



Hogs

Further seasonal price advances to a summer high are in prospect. The increase from last December's low has carried prices up about \$4. By mid-year, marketings will be considerably below a year earlier and they will stay below the rest of 1960. Prices during this period are likely to average substantially higher.

SEAWAY TAKES SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN OUR GRAIN EXPORTS

Over 14 percent of our grain that was exported last year moved from ports on the Great Lakes—as compared to only 4 percent in 1958. In both years slightly over half the export volume moved through gulf ports. Relative volumes moving through Atlantic and Pacific ports dropped somewhat.

Grain, grain products, and other agricultural products accounted for over 36 percent of the total United States and Canadian cargo moved on the St. Lawrence Seaway. Our grain exports from lake ports amounted to more than 138 million bushels. Of this total, almost 87 million bushels moved directly overseas in oceangoing vessels—more than 60 times the 1958 volume.

All Great Lakes ports shared in this increased grain traffic. Duluth-Superior exported 10 times as much grain in 1959 as in 1958. The export volume from Chicago and Toledo more than doubled. Most of our grain going directly overseas moved from Duluth-Superior and Chicago. Toledo's shipments moved primarily to Canadian lake ports and to ports on the lower St. Lawrence River.

Corn made up 31 percent of the 138 million bushels of grain exported from our lake ports in 1959. Oats accounted for 23 percent; barley, 18 percent; soybeans, 13 percent; wheat, 9 percent; flaxseed, 5 percent; and rye, less than 1 percent.

The export demand for grain at the lake ports brought a considerable increase in the volume trucked to each of these ports in 1959. Total rail receipts at lake ports were also up, although receipts at Chicago were down 21 percent. Barge receipts at Chicago also dropped about 21 percent.

1960

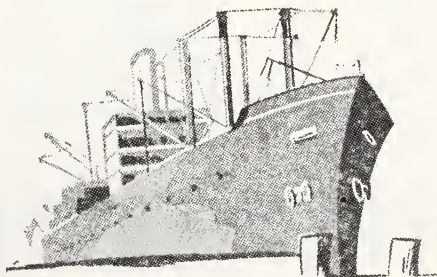
How much grain will move along the seaway in 1960? A lot will depend on the level of charges from interior points to ports and from ports to overseas destinations, and on the physical facilities available for the expeditious transfer and movement of grain.

Competition among railroads for export traffic, along with competition between the several modes of transport, has brought rate reductions from interior points to the various port areas. Shippers using the Great Lakes-seaway route will benefit as well as those using Atlantic and gulf ports. Early indications are that 1960 charges for overseas shipment of grain from lake ports will be about the same as in 1959. Transportation savings in 1959 ranged from 6 to 14 cents a bushel, depending on export routing.

Seaway shippers will also benefit from improved grain handling facilities at Great Lakes ports. Harbors and channels are being dredged. New facilities are being constructed on deeper water and present facilities are being equipped with more efficient vessel-loading equipment. All of this means that vessels will be able to load faster, load heavier, and move more rapidly through the Great Lakes-seaway route.

A substantial increase in the volume of grain exported through the seaway in 1960 could be brought about by greater efficiency resulting from the first year's experience, improved facilities, and the reduced rates to Great Lakes ports. If the overall volume exported from the United States approaches the high levels of recent years, some lake ports expect a 25- to 35-percent volume increase.

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WHEAT:

RED OR WHITE? HARD OR SOFT?

Buying a loaf of bread? What kind of wheat was used to produce the flour used in that loaf? Or in those oven-ready rolls, that box of cereal, or those delicious refrigerated sweet rolls? To many of us, wheat is just wheat. We give little or no thought to the kind of wheat used to produce those products. But to the miller and baker, wheat class is all important because bakery products generally require a specific class of wheat.

Wheat is divided into seven classes: hard red winter, soft red winter, hard red spring, white, durum, red durum, and mixed. Today production is largely confined to the first five classes named. Red durum production has declined to a point of relative insignificance, and as the name implies, the mixed class consists of a mixture of two or more of the other classes of wheat.

Hard Red Winter . . .

The largest class, both from the standpoint of acreage and production, is hard red winter. This class is used primarily for bread flour. Most of it is produced in an area bounded by the Mississippi, Missouri, and Rio Grande Rivers and the Rocky Mountains. This area is commonly identified as the Central and Southern Great Plains, an area subject to limited rainfall that on occasion may be so reduced that severe drought develops.

Weather probably exerts more influence on hard red winter wheat than any other class. Irrigation and commercial fertilizers have, as yet, made only limited contributions to hard red winter wheat production—far less than the dryland cropping practices utilized by growers.

Favorable weather conditions in the Plains in 1958 soared hard red winter wheat production to a record 838 million bushels. During the “dust bowl” year of 1933, production hit a low of 177 million bushels. The 1950–59 average has been 530 million bushels.

Soft Red Winter . . .

Soft red winter wheat, used in making pastry, crackers, biscuits, and cakes, is confined to the area east of the Mississippi River. But it does compete with hard red winter for the same land in States bordering the Mississippi River. This competition has brought about some rather sharp shifts in class production in these States over a relatively short span of years.

The longtime trend shows that the soft red winter has been losing ground to hard red winter. The largest soft red winter crop—357 million bushels—came in 1919, the first year records were kept. The record low came in 1943 when 125 million bushels were produced. In the last 10 years production averaged 180 million bushels a year.

White . . .

Although its acreage is relatively small, white wheat stretches from New York to California. Most of it is produced in the Pacific coast and Northern Rocky Mountain States, but Michigan and New York are important producers.

White wheat also used in pastries, crackers, biscuits, and cakes has the distinction of including varieties seeded in the fall and in the spring. So this class contributes to both the winter wheat and the spring wheat crops. Its major contribution is in the winter wheat bin.





White wheat production has been on a steady though unspectacular rise—climbing from 90 million bushels in 1919 to 172 million in 1959. In the past 10 years production has averaged 167 million bushels a year.

Hard Red Spring . . .

Hard red spring wheat, used primarily for bread flour, occupies a relatively narrow belt running from Wisconsin to the Pacific coast, with the major acreage centered in the Dakotas and Montana. Production of this class has shown the least fluctuation although there has been occasional years of unusually low production as a result of rust or drought.

The red spring class must place considerable dependence on rainfall, although an increasing proportion is moving under the favorable influence of irrigation. Hard red spring production reached a record high of 256 mil-

lion bushels in 1951. Yearly production averaged 192 million bushels from 1950 through 1959.

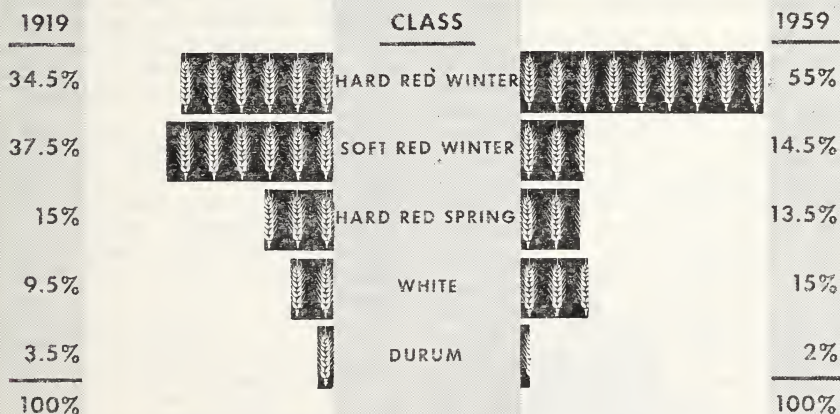
Durum . . .

Durum wheat is by far the smallest production of the classes and seeks the specialized production of macaroni, spaghetti, and similar products. Production of durum is centered in North Dakota, with minor production in bordering States. Durum has been on a declining trend, experiencing considerable difficulty in recovering from the disastrous rust epidemic of 1953 and especially 1954.

Production of durum wheat climbed to a record high of 99 million bushels in 1928. A record low crop of 5 million bushels was produced in 1954. The crop has averaged 26 million bushels a year in the past 10 years.

John W. Kirkbride
Agricultural Estimates Division, AMS

MAKE-UP OF THE WHEAT CROP



RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GAINS MOMENTUM

A lot has happened in recent months to heighten interest in the rural development program. More rural leaders are thinking about what the program can do to help small towns and farming communities solve their problems.

The program, designed to help farmers and other rural people whose incomes are too low to obtain an adequate standard of living, was started locally in 1956. It now includes some 200 counties in 30 States, and Puerto Rico.

Late last year President Eisenhower issued an order officially setting up the "Committee for Rural Development Program." The committee includes Under Secretaries of various Federal departments and "provides leadership and uniform policy guidance for the program."

States

Here's what's been happening in a few "Rural Development" States:

Governor Hollings of South Carolina announced plans early this year to set up a statewide development program for small rural communities. The program will utilize the services of South Carolina's Development Commission and Agricultural Extension Service.

Michigan's rural development program now includes all 15 counties in the Upper Peninsula. An extension center has been set up at Marquette by Michigan State University to channel technical assistance into the 15 counties. Farming, industry development, forestry, tourism, and youth work are all included in the program.

The Arkansas Legislature recently agreed to changes in State laws that will step up financing of industrial buildings in towns serving rural areas. Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service has named a State leader to promote "the total development of resources in the counties of the State."

In Alabama, expansion is planned to an area program including several rural counties. Missouri will hold

training sessions this summer for agency and private leaders in local programs.

Tennessee points to these major accomplishments in its five rural development counties—

—New industries started or in the building stage that will add more than 1,000 jobs.

—Communitywide approval in all five counties for financing of industrial buildings, water systems, and road improvements to help industry development.

—New vocational classes in three of the counties to teach carpentry, metal and machine work, and masonry.

—Expanded livestock and poultry enterprises, including a \$1.5 million dairy industry in one county—built from "scratch" in the last 3 years.

This kind of progress in the rural development program, not only in Tennessee but in the other 29 States, depends almost entirely on how much effort local nongovernment people put into it. They're the real leaders. However they're not doing the job alone.

State and national government agencies are also working hard. For example, extension services in the 30 States have added agents to participating counties and areas to help local people get the program underway.

Other resources are going into the program through the Soil Conservation Service; Farmers Home Administration; county ASC committees; State forestry, employment, education, and health departments; Small Business Administration; and USDA research agencies.

Joseph Doherty
Office of Information

The Farmer's Share

The farmer's share of the consumer's food dollar was 40 cents in March, 2 cents higher than in February.

PHOSPHORUS GAINS IMPORTANCE IN FEEDS

Mineral feeds play an important part in the feeding of livestock and poultry. Minerals are added to most commercial feeds and are also fed separately by livestock producers. They have many vital functions in animal feeding since the bones of livestock and poultry are composed chiefly of minerals. Minerals also are important parts of the tissues and fluids of the body.

In addition to phosphorus, calcium, and common salt, the term "mineral feed" refers to the trace minerals—iodine, copper, iron, cobalt, and manganese—as well as other mineral nutrients or compounds.

Livestock obtain some of their mineral requirements from roughage, with the amount varying considerably in various sections of the country. Generally, however, the minerals available from these sources are not sufficient to provide quantities necessary for efficient and economical production of meat, milk, and eggs.

For this reason, the natural sources of minerals must often be supplemented by inorganic sources, particularly for those livestock fed small amounts of concentrates.

In recent years, there has been a pronounced increase in the use of inorganic phosphorus in feeds. Emphasis on balanced livestock rations has contributed to much of this increase. Increased use of oilseed meals and relatively less use of animal proteins also has been a factor. The phosphorus content of soybean meal, the principal oilseed meal, is 0.6 to 0.7 percent, whereas meat meal contains from 3.0 to 4.0 percent. The cost of the phosphorus added to a feed is often greater than the cost of all the other mineral supplements combined. Both salt and calcium are inexpensive and the trace elements are of relatively minor economic importance because usually only limited quantities are needed.

The growing importance of inorganic phosphorus in feeding is pointed up by the steady increase in production of dicalcium phosphate. This is the principal source of phosphorus. It is esti-

mated that dicalcium makes up about a third of the total inorganic phosphorus fed to livestock. Dicalcium phosphate production in 1959 was 272,717 tons, five times that produced in 1951. Other major sources of phosphorus are defluorinated phosphate, bonemeal, imported rock phosphate, and colloidal phosphate.

The price of dicalcium phosphate at Chicago in mid-April 1960 was \$83, while that of steamed bonemeal was \$102.50 per ton. The wholesale price of calcium carbonate, a major source of calcium, was \$9.54 a ton, and iodized salt was \$31 a ton.

Livestock feeders should consider carefully the relative costs of the various phosphorus sources including commercial mineral mixtures. Most sources of phosphorus also contain some other minerals which should be taken into consideration. In buying commercial mineral mixtures, particular attention should be given to the guaranteed mineral content of the mixture. Likewise, since the price of phosphorus is considerably higher than that of calcium or salt, the price of the mixture should reflect the relative quantities of each of the ingredients.

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Agricultural Economics Division, AMS

PRACTICE SAFETY

NATIONAL

FARM SAFETY
WEEK

JULY 24-30
1960



FATS AND OILS FACE INCREASED COMPETITION

Since the end of World War II there has been a growing demand for paints that are better suited to the "do-it-yourself" requirements of the homeowner. These new convenience products contain, for the most part, little if any drying oil.

The use of water-thinned latex paints (nonoil paints) has been growing because they're easy to apply and clean up, and relatively free of odor. And the paint manufacturers have been promoting them effectively. The loss of oil markets in floor covering and oilcloth mainly reflects the shifts toward vinyl and asphalt tiles.

Use

Fat and oil use in drying oil products has failed to keep pace with the dynamic growth in industrial activity during the postwar era. The use of fats and oils in these products has declined from a record 1.2 billion pounds in 1950 to 0.9 billion pounds in 1959.

Paints and varnishes account for over 80 percent of the drying oils used—floor coverings, oilcloth, and other products take the balance.

Total production of paints, varnishes, and lacquers has expanded from around 336 million gallons in 1940 to a record 719 million in 1955. Production since then has been relatively stable, averaging about 675 million gallons a year—despite heavy construction activity.

This stability probably reflects the improved quality of the newer coatings, which are not only more durable than earlier types, but require a smaller quantity for a given job. It also reflects the architectural trend toward the replacement of wood by other materials such as aluminum, brick, glass, stainless steel, and stone, which has reduced the demand for exterior paints. On the other hand, the demand for interior paints has increased.

Important technological changes in the basic formulation of paints, var-

nishes, and lacquers have occurred, resulting in a shift from agricultural fats and oils toward synthetic materials of the industrial chemical industries. Competition from latex paints which do not contain drying oils has resulted in new oil products and better methods of processing familiar oils. Some of these oil-type products (alkyds) reduce oil consumption per gallon of coating.

From 1940 to 1959 the use of fats and oils per gallon of paint and varnish produced dropped from 2 pounds to about 1.2 pounds. At the same time, the use of plastics per gallon increased from 0.3 pound to about 1.3 pounds. This trend mainly reflects the replacement of fats and oils by synthetic resins, some of which contain drying oil (alkyds) and others (latex emulsion paints) which do not contain drying oils. This shift is still in progress.

The outlook indicates that the output of paint and varnishes probably will rise, but the use of fats and oils in their manufacture may not share in the increase because of the continuing shift to synthetic materials and the changes in paint formulas requiring drying oils. Production of protective coatings made entirely with oil (linseed exterior house paints) probably will continue to decline, whereas coatings containing some oil and no oil will probably increase.

Linseed oil continues to be the major drying oil used in protective coatings because of its adaptability to exterior house paint for wood, although its use has been declining in recent years.

Distribution

In 1959 the 0.9 billion pounds of drying oils used in all drying oil products were distributed as follows: Linseed, 49 percent; soybean, 18 percent; tall, 11 percent; castor, 9 percent; tung, 5 percent; fish, 3 percent; and all others, 5 percent.

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PIG CROP REPORTS

ANSWER MANY QUESTIONS

During recent months a lot has been said about the pig crop and what is in store for the hog farmer.

Many questions are heard. How many pigs will there be? Where are they being raised? When will they go to market?

Information to help answer these questions can be found in reports issued by the Crop Reporting Board of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Schedule . . .

Here is a brief rundown on pig and hog reports that come out during the year:

There are two pig crop reports with data by regions and for each of 48 States—issued June 21 and December 22 this year. Included are estimates of sows farrowing each month during the 6-month period prior to the report, pigs saved during this period, and farrowing intentions for the following 6 months. Also, the number of hogs by age classes on hand June 1 and December 1 in 10 leading hog-producing States are listed.

Two other pig crop reports provide information for each of 10 leading States. One was published March 17. The other is due out September 19. These reports give quarterly estimates of sows farrowed, farrowing intentions, and hog inventories by age classes.

In addition, the Board puts out a monthly report on commercial hog slaughter by States, and an annual report on the production and disposition of hogs, and the income from them. January 1 inventories and inventory values by States are published about February 12 in the Livestock and Poultry Inventory Report.

The pig crop reports in particular are guides to marketings in the future.

The information on pigs saved and on hog inventories in leading States indicate what the supplies of hogs are likely to be at marketing time. But the reports do much more than just indicate marketings. They help answer questions like: How much corn and how much supplement is needed to feed the pig crop and where is the feed needed?

What are the requirements of vaccines, antibiotics, and other medicinal products needed to raise hogs? When and where are they needed?

What is required in the way of equipment to produce hogs, such as fencing, feed pens, hog houses, and watering equipment.

To answer these and many more questions, farmers and persons serving them need to know how many hogs are being produced, where these hogs are located, and when they are likely to move to market. They need to know this in order to provide needed services and to plan their operations to prevent the chaos of surplus in one place and shortages in another.

The hog farmer wants to know what he can expect in the way of income from the hogs he produces. He can make satisfactory estimates of his production costs, he knows about how many pigs he can raise from a given number of sows, and he knows about when he can put them on the market. As he makes his plans the crucial unknown is the price he will get when he markets his hogs.

He also wants to know what prices will be before and after his usual marketing date so he can decide when to farrow his sows, how fast to push his pigs, and the weight at which he should sell them. One important price determining factor at any given time is the supply available for market.

(Continued on next page)





Reports—Continued

The basic purpose of the Department's pig crop report is to provide farmers, agricultural interests, and the general public with accurate, unbiased, and timely facts to help them answer these questions and plan their operations.

We have just touched on some of the needs for pig crop statistics and have emphasized that an important use is to give a clue to the future.

Sources . . .

Where is information obtained for these reports?

Many sources are tapped to develop the pig crop estimates. Voluntary farmer reporters—some 170,000 of them—provide the basic information for the June and December reports. They answer questionnaires distributed by rural mail carriers to a cross section of farmers on their routes. In March and September the forms are addressed to lists maintained by the USDA State statisticians.

Although mailing inquiries to farmers is the main way of gathering information, many other sources of information are used. In several leading hog-producing States, information on farrowing is obtained from annual State farm censuses, usually made in the spring by tax assessors. Then there is voluntary reporting by livestock auctions, slaughterhouses, transportation concerns, and many others.

In most cases, statistics are most useful in terms of what happened in the past. To know that the 1959 pig crop totaled 101.6 million head is useful, but it is more useful if compared with the number produced in previous years. The Crop Reporting Board reviews and revises, as necessary, the originally published estimates in order to provide a firm basis for more accurate current estimates.

Records of marketings and slaughter, final State farm census data, data every fifth year from the U.S. Census of Agri-

culture, and other related information provide the basis for revisions.

Just how accurate are USDA's pig crop reports?

In connection with spring farrowings, between 1948 and 1957, the Department's final estimates of changes from the previous year were the same as the first estimate (which was made only 3 weeks after the end of the farrowing season) for 3 years, only 1 percent change for 3 years, 2 percent for 3 years, and 3 percent for 1 year. The average revision for this 10-year period was 1.2 percentage points.

An important part of the pig crop report is the information on farrowing intentions. The reports on intentions are designed to provide a measure of what hog producers are planning, in time to permit changes in their plans.

Thus, another question often asked is: How well do farmers carry out their intentions? Here are some facts on the extent of changes they have made: Spring farrowing intentions as published in December compared with the final revised farrowing estimates show that departures from intentions, without regard to direction in the past 12 years were: 1 percent in 3 of the years, 2 percent in 1 year, 3 percent in 5 years, 4 percent in 2 years, and 6 percent in 1 year.

Program . . .

The Department's livestock statistical program is the envy of livestock statisticians in other countries. It is a good program, but demands for statistics are increasing every day. The livestockman and those who serve him want and need more comprehensive, and more frequent statistical reports—data that provide an up-to-date measure of the dynamic changes that are underway in the livestock industry.

The Crop Reporting Board is constantly studying these needs and is working to provide a program that gets better each year.

Robert Moats
Agricultural Estimates Division, AMS

"Bert" Newell's

Letter

Did you ever have to "eat crow?" Incidentally, I wonder where that expression came from anyway. I've been watching a couple of crows that have built a nest in our block, and they can make the darndest racket. The other day they were out in our yard strutting around and bragging to beat the band until a mockingbird got fed up and chased them back to their own bailiwick.

Maybe the expression got started because these big old black birds think they are so smart and talk so much. Then along comes a little bird about a tenth their size and calls their bluff. Anyway, everyone knows that when a fellow gets caught talking out of turn, bragging, or making statements that the facts won't support, he has to back down and, as we say, "eat crow."

I never ought to get caught in a situation like this because in our service we have to be pretty careful of the kind of talking we do. I remember a good many years ago when a wire came in from the Ozarks saying that the whole peach crop had been completely destroyed by frost. This was big news. In my youthful enthusiasm I dashed in to my Chief proposing that a special flash report should go out right away. Now my boss was a wise old guy of few words but lots of understanding about almost everything cropwise and weatherwise. He glanced over the wire, snorted, and tossed it back to me.

Well, sir, I was dancing around there like a flea on a hot griddle. Here was big news and this old duffer wasn't even impressed. Finally he took the wire, read it carefully, then handed it back with the remark, "You have to kill the crop in that area about three times before it means very much." He wouldn't let me put out my flash report and, you know, he wasn't such an old duffer; he was right. They ended up harvesting about an average crop in the Ozarks that year.

Every year we get a lot of reports like that. Most of the time it isn't that

anyone is trying to "talk up a storm." It's rather that an individual sometimes draws too broad a conclusion from a local observation, or, as we say, he has too small a sample. We, of course, like to get the local reports, but every now and then information of this sort gets wide publicity and we immediately get a lot of inquiries— and, yes, some criticisms, too.

Now don't get the idea that we think we are always right. We can and do miss. But there is one thing that can't be overlooked. There is no other service in the country that gets as wide a coverage as does the crop and livestock reporting service. With 43 offices and trained observers working in every State, together with the thousands of voluntary reports, we are able to probe into every nook and cranny all over the United States. When we talk, we at least try to be sure that we have put all of the pieces together in their proper proportions and have covered the entire situation. Even though we may have to have a "crow" sandwich for lunch once in a while, the broad coverage and strictly objective analysis we give the whole situation is bound to be a valuable protection to everybody.

But I got off the subject. What really got me going on this came about as a result of some snide remarks I made a few years ago about these pantywaist guys who had to have a power mower for a postage-stamp plot of grass. I used to take my trusty handmower and prance back and forth over a couple of hundred-foot swath of lawn while making fun of some of my neighbors who wheeled out their little buzz-buggies to trim up a little old 20-by 40-foot patch. Last Saturday my neighbor Bill stopped by and with a twinkle in his eye asked me how I liked my new power lawnmower. I knew what he was getting at, all right. That long 200-foot stretch from the street to my garage had been getting longer every season for the past 25 years. Yes—I am eating crow. The power lawnmower works pretty good.



S. R. Newell
Chairman, Crop Reporting Board, AMS

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